

**Meeting Summary**  
**March 21, 2012 - DRAFT**

**Members Present:** Sanita Alrey-DeBose, Melissa Brown, Robert Caggiano, Joseph Capuano, Regina Dull, Jonathan Fink, Sean Gabaree, Chelsea Johnson, Michael Kallens, Larysa Kurylas, Sara Lappano, Tom Martin, James Mensah, Patrick Naehu, Susan Petersen, Dianne Whitaker

**Members Absent:** Zoe Lefkowitz, Chris Lindsay, Manuel Ochoa, Erin Roberts

**Guests:** Ben Gross, on behalf of Wheaton Patch; Elizabeth Chaisson, on behalf of GreenWheaton; Marian Fryer on behalf of Wheaton Civic Coalition; Jeanette Feldner on behalf of Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee; Ash Kosiewicz on behalf of the Coalition for Fair Redevelopment of Wheaton; Ursula Iannone, on behalf of the Latin American Advisory Group; Adam Fogel, on behalf of Council Member Navarro, Greg Ossont on behalf of the Department of General Services; and, Ross Feldner, resident.

**Call to Order:** Jonathan Fink, Chair, convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

**Approval of February 15, 2012 Meeting Summary** – Ms. Peterson noted the Summary’s statement concerning the Project Review Committee should reflect that the committee did not meet in February, rather than January. A motion to approve the Summary, as corrected was made by Ms. Peterson, seconded by Ms. Lappano and approved unanimously.

**Redevelopment Report** – Mr. Klein reported the following:

- **Zoe Lefkowitz** has resigned from WRAC
- **Town of Kensington Meeting** - Mr. Klein accompanied Ms. Kurylas to a recent meeting to address questions raised regarding Wheaton Redevelopment and the proposed Wheaton’s New Downtown Public-Private Partnership.
- **Proposed Bill 6-12 Economic Development, Small Business Assistance** - At the Council’s Public Hearing, Ms. DeBose and Mr. Ochoa testified in favor of proposed Bill 6-12 which would provide technical and impact assistance for small businesses adversely affected by county-related redevelopment projects. All 22 persons who testified supported the bill.
- **Lowe Enterprises** - is moving ahead with its project and has submitted its Sketch Plan to M-NCPPC. Next step will be a meeting with the Department’s Plan Review committee.
- **BBT Bank** - The Planning Board approved the project’s Preliminary Plan and Site Plan in February. Subject to the permitting process, construction is anticipated to begin in the Fall.
- **Westfield** - The parking waiver that Westfield requested was approved. Good weather has allowed accelerated construction on the Costco Warehouse and Dick’s Sporting goods. Both stores are expected to open in October.

- **Costco Special Exception re: Fueling Station** – Costco has scheduled a public meeting for 7:00 p.m. on April 25 at Crossways, Inc. They will present to the Planning Board on May 17 and have, reserved 4 dates before the Hearing Examiner - June 4, 8, 11 and 15.
- **Bikeshare** - Conversations with the State, which is the grant provider for this program, have indicated initial locations will be at stations closer to the District of Columbia making it unlikely that Wheaton will be participating in the first year.
- **Washington Properties** - has applied for a permit to demolish the 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church of Wheaton. Construction on the 221-unit residential project should begin soon after that.
- **Safeway/Patriot/Foulger Pratt** - the mild winter has also helped construction on this project as well. Safeway's exterior construction is expected to be completed by year-end 2012.
- **County Executive's Annual Boards, Committees and Commissions Meeting** - WRAC Chair Jonathan Fink and Vice Chair Susan Petersen attended the County Executive's annual meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees. Mr. Fink thanked the County Exec for his support of Wheaton redevelopment and the proposed CIP Budget for Wheaton Redevelopment
- **County Executive's Operating Budget** - was submitted On March 15. The proposed budget calls for 5% increase over last year. As proposed, the Urban District's Clean & Safe Team would see an increase in dollars budgeted. Dianne Whittaker advised that the proposed Operating budget will increase library hours and on March 5, the PHED committee voted 5-4 in favor of moving project forward in the CIP. On March 17, the full Council conducted a straw vote unanimously approving a proposal to begin planning and design for a new Library/Rec Center in FY 13 with construction to commence in FY 15 instead of FY 18
- **Royal Mile Pub** - a Wheaton landmark, has reopened

**CIP for Wheaton's New Downtown** – Mr. Fink introduced the topic, urging WRAC members to engage in the conversation, mindful of their advisory role to the County Executive and County Council. He introduced Greg Ossont, Deputy Director of the Department of General Services (DGS) and Adam Fogel, Chief of Staff for Council member Nancy Navarro.

Mr. Ossont indicated the following:

- There was good news regarding the Wheaton Library CIP. The PHED Committee had recommended that planning and design monies be programmed for FY 13 with construction commencing in FY15 rather than FY18. He noted that at the September WRAC meeting there was discussion regarding the possibility of a design competition for the new Library. Since this CIP is moving forward quicker than originally anticipated, that will need to be considered sooner rather than later. Messrs. Klein and McGinnity will need to touch base with the project management team assigned to the library, as the team will have to shuffle priorities if Library project is advanced.

- Mr. Ossont reiterated the County Executive's \$41.5 million CIP proposal, monies would be used for the construction of a platform over the busbays, the construction of a Town Square, and interim bus operations, i.e. temporary relocation of the busbays, during construction of the platform. He indicated that Council Staff presented alternate proposal at the PHED meeting on March 12, recommend that the initial phase of Wheaton redevelopment begin on Parking Lot 13, with the construction of a Park & Planning headquarters, a second, County-owned and occupied office bldg and a larger Town Square. The platform construction was excluded from the Council's counterproposal.
- DGS Director David Dise & PHED Chair Nancy Floreen asked both Council and Exec staff to "go back and make sure that language in the CIP is flexible enough to consider a variety of options."
- The focus of both the County Executive and County Council is to arrive at common ground on the CIP for Wheaton redevelopment. Both sides want a meaningful redevelopment of Wheaton. Dollarwise, the Council's counterproposal was larger than what the County Executive proposed, but it significantly changed the phasing of the project by making development on Parking Lot 13, rather than development over the busbays, the primary focus. The principal issues which the Executive and Council staffs need to address are phasing and the order of phasing.
- Ultimately, Executive staff hopes to have language in the CIP that allows both development over the busbays and Parking Lot 13 to be done. Since initial development of Parking Lot 13 would eliminate it as a location for interim bus operations if the platform is constructed, Executive staff is again exploring alternative locations for interim bus operations. This would allow for simultaneous development of Platform & Lot 13, reducing the level of disruption to local small businesses, which Council staff has cited as a significant concern.
- There is no doubt that both the County Executive and the County Council support a significant monetary commitment to Wheaton, but the principal area of difference is in the phasing of redevelopment.
- Idea is to resolve differences by April 10 when the full Council will consider the Wheaton Redevelopment CIP.

Mr. Fogel indicated the following:

- Council member Navarro supports a comprehensive approach to Wheaton's redevelopment and revitalization.
- Council and Executive staffs are working together to produce a CIP that reflects a comprehensive approach to Wheaton Redevelopment.
- In addition to supporting the changes to the Wheaton Library CIP, the Council's Education Committee moved Wheaton/Edison High School modernization back on to the approved schedule.
- Council member Navarro supports the County Executive's Operating Budget proposal for the enhancement of positive youth programming which will fund 4 centers including Wheaton.

- She introduced Bill 6-12, the Small Business Assistance program which would assist Wheaton small businesses during redevelopment.
- Council member Navarro recognizes and commends the significant level of community input regarding the Wheaton Redevelopment CIP.

WRAC members expressed concern for what they felt was the opacity of the CIP process, particularly the limited time the public had to vet a counterproposal, just four days prior to Council consideration. Mr. Fogel acknowledged their concern, and indicated that the Council and the Executive receive the work session packets the same time as the general public. He observed that the overall CIP process places significant restraints on available time to consider proposed changes.

Mr. Ossont suggested that WRAC, and the community in general should provide comment as soon as possible, however members of WRAC indicated that the challenge was not having information to which it could react.

Mr. Fink, as Chair requested that Mr. Fogel share these concerns with Ms. Navarro and the rest of the Council.

Mr. Fink proposed that WRAC send a letter to the County Council voicing support for a CIP that does not preclude platform construction, and supports the idea that Council and Executive staffs work together to explore a scenario permits simultaneous development of both the busbay platform and Parking Lot 13.

**Motion:** Mr. Gabaree made a motion that WRAC send the letter

**Second:** Mr. Martin seconded the motion

**The motion carried unanimously**

**Price Avenue Streetscape** – Mr. Klein advised that sidewalk improvements are proposed for the north side of Price Avenue, between Elkin Street and Georgia Avenue. This will continue the streetscape improvements already done between Ennalls Avenue and Elkin Street. The redevelopment Program explored the possibility of narrowing the street to create a wider sidewalk, but the Department of Transportation rejected possibility of reducing the width of a designated business street within the Master Plan. The next steps are to get cost estimates from the contractor and then order materials – e.g. streetlights, metal treegrates. It is possible that construction will start this summer.

**Proposed revisions to WRAC Charter** – Mr. Martin reminded the committee that the subject was introduced for consideration at the February WRAC meeting. WRAC's Vision Statement has also been revised. Mr. Martin sought input from full committee as to the revision that had been proposed. Mr. Fink recommended that the Charter revisions be scheduled as an action item on the April meeting Agenda for committee vote. Mr. McGinnity explained that a significant portion of the proposed changes posed relate to the Redevelopment Program's transition from the Regional Services Center to the Department of General Services.

**Proposed Award: “Investing in Wheaton’s Future”** The Planning & Visioning subcommittee, proposed an award from WRAC for businesses that contribute to Wheaton’s revitalization. Nominations would be sought from all WRAC members. Nominated businesses would be judged by the Planning & Visioning subcommittee based on criteria to be established, award recommendations brought back to the full WRAC for final selection. The award would be given annually, at either the Wheaton-Kensington Chamber of Commerce’s Community Awards Banquet or the Taste of Wheaton. The focus is on existing businesses whose investment contributes to revitalization efforts. The full committee was encouraged to email Mr. Martin with suggestions for criteria. Mr. Klein advised that once program is defined and finalized by the committee it will go to the County Attorney for review and approval and subsequently to the County Executive for final approval. The Chamber is supportive of the award.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

- Economic Development – Mr. Capuano reported the following:
  - Ms. Alrey-DeBose briefed them on the Public Hearing for Bill 6-12 at which she testified on behalf of WRAC.
  - The subcommittee also worked on a list of items it should be considered when meeting with Wheaton businesses, similar to a “mystery shop”.
  - The next meeting will be held at Christina’s restaurant on April 3 at 5:30 p.m.
  - Small Business Surveys are in the process of being printed at the County’s Print Shop.
  - The Department of Economic Development plans to help commercial office tenants at 11141 Georgia Avenue (Lowe Enterprises) find alternative office space
- Project Review – Ms. Petersen advised that the committee did not meet in February, as there were no pending projects for review. Ms. Petersen was doubtful of the subcommittee’s need to meet in March. Mr. McGinnity advised that Costco was requesting the opportunity to give a presentation to WRAC concerning its Special Exception hearing for its proposed fueling station. It was determined that the presentation be given to the full WRAC committee, rather than the Project review subcommittee, at its April meeting.
- Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin reported that the items previously discussed at tonight’s meeting had been the focus of the Subcommittee’s March meeting.

**GreenWheaton Update** – Ms. Chaisson advised that GreenWheaton would hold its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 27 at 7:30 p.m. in the Mid County Regional Service Center. The focus would be water conservation. Guest speaker Ann English will talk about the Rainscapes Program, and Susan Marinelli from the County’s Department of environmental Protection will speak about “My Green Montgomery” a new website being launched by the Department. Ms Chaisson advised that anyone requesting additional information could contact her at [Eliz.chaisson@verizon.com](mailto:Eliz.chaisson@verizon.com)

**Motion to Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.